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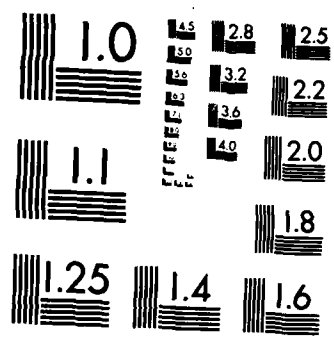

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Despite many other disagreements among experts on terrorism, it is at least agreed that individuals who become terrorists feel alienated from society. This alienation may be the product of distinct social, economic, political, or psychological factors or a combination of them. The person who drifts into terrorism, then, feels himself to be an outsider. His self-perception as an outsider may be based on his ethnic or religious affiliation, his inability to find personally satisfying or financially rewarding employment or his estrangement from the political mainstream in his country, or he may regard himself as one of the few true idealists in an unjust world.

My colleague, Konrad Kellen, has argued that, "The road to terrorism generally begins with some form of alienation, sometimes mixed with boredom".** The terrorist's age (youth) often plays a key role in this journey. Young people tend to congregate with one another at school or work, in social clubs, bars or discotheques. By associating with other disaffected peers, the would-be terrorist, perhaps for the first time, discovers that he is not alone in his negative feelings toward, and perceptions of, society and the world around him. He finds that others share his emotions of disillusionment and alienation, and see everywhere closed doors to social or economic advancement. With his peers, the would-be terrorist also finds empathy, understanding, comradery and a sense of belonging he hitherto felt deprived of. As the German terrorist, Bommi Baumann, recounts in his memoir, *Terror Or Love,* he finally felt as if he "belonged" somewhere and to something: the

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*Paper presented at "The International Symposium On Rehabilitation Of Terrorists In Turkey", Istanbul, Turkey, 21-23 January 1985.

**See Konrad Kellen, *Terrorists--What Are They Like? How Some Terrorists Describe Their World and Actions,* The Rand Corporation, N-1300-SL, November 1979. The author wishes to express his appreciation to Konrad Kellen for his helpful comments and suggestions regarding this paper.

"group" of his like-minded peers furnished the security and fraternity that was the direct antithesis of his prior feelings of alienation and isolation.

With his new friends, the prospective terrorist is drawn into cathartic discussions of the inequities that society subjects them to. Complaining and idle talk, however, soon give way to vague formulations of schemes to "change things." In short, from this communal atmosphere a mutual, hitherto unknown stre gth is discovered which simultaneously satisfies and counteracts prior feelings of powerlessness. The chasm of previously felt inaction and impotence is filled by "action" to redress his grievances. Initially, this action may take the form of participation in protest demonstrations or similar activities sparked by his discontent. This may then set him on the path towards escalating militancy and growing extremism, from marching and chanting to stone-throwing and rioting. Finally, fueled by this surging anger, he becomes less and less convinced of the ultimate efficacy of such acts and their limited repercussions and more and more convinced of the need for "real" action with wider repercussions: that is, illegality and, finally, terrorism.

Becoming a terrorist, then, is a logical--if extreme--progression from early, *legal* protest. First, the would-be terrorist's need to "belong" is assuaged in the most extravagant way possible: membership in a small, tightly-knit, clandestine, brotherhood--that he finds in a terrorist group. The pervasive fear of discovery and apprehension by the police contributes to this feeling of "belonging": bonding the members of the group ever tighter and fostering--at least, initially--a communally-shared thrill of excitement of living life "on the run". Second, the would-be terrorist acquires what he may always have lacked: a sense of purpose and direction. And from this, he gets a sense of power: power to act to redress his grievances, power to effect changes in society or government, or, simply, power to finally be able to do something. Third, a terrorist group is, by nature, "action oriented": the days of complaining and talk are behind them and a time of taking action before them. The terrorist thus emerges from his isolation and purposelessness to become a crusader, a fighter for a cause and, in classic Marxist-Leninist terms, a member or even a leader of the revolutionary vanguard.

These factors explain in large measure why the alienated "drop-out" chooses terrorism over commercial crime. "The terrorist", Kellen has written, "is different from the ordinary criminal in that he is not egocentric but pursues purposes beyond his person that, generally, he believes to be serving a good cause. The criminal, on the other hand, does not see himself as serving any cause at all" except his own personal enrichment. Moreover, the above factors combine to make terrorism a much more attractive avocation than crime: the criminal underworld being starkly different from the terrorist underground.

Criminals lack the fraternal bonds that exist between terrorists both within their country of origin or residence and with those of other countries as well. There is no sophisticated network of sympathizers and covert supporters whom they can turn to for help and lodging. The criminal thus functions alone or, in some instances, with a small coterie of associates. Generally, there is no "brotherhood of criminals" in the sense that a "brotherhood of terrorists" exists in many countries. The purpose and goals of crime are narrowly circumscribed: there are few, if any, meaningful long-term goals which the criminal aspires to. More importantly, in a situation where personal profit is the only motive, no altruistic or far-reaching satisfaction can be achieved. Finally, there is little, if any, cathartic satisfaction of striking back at an oppressive society or repressive state. Crime is directed against an individual victim or against a collective entity (a bank), but not against the source of the drop-out's hostility and alienation. Even if the criminal fancies himself as a latter day Robin Hood, the seizure of money from a bank--except as a means to an end (e.g., to finance future terrorist operations)--has no genuine political or social ramifications or far-reaching repercussions. In sum, the criminal, unlike the terrorist, is unable to see himself--or become intoxicated by thoughts of--belonging to, and being involved in, some grand effort greater than himself and with wide implications such as a revolution.

Since studies of terrorist prisoners in a number of countries (Italy, Germany and Turkey among them) have concluded that in many cases it was a matter of chance whether the prisoner joined a left- or a right-

wing terrorist group, it appears that the aforementioned factors can at times carry greater weight in one's decision to become a terrorist than political ideology. Accordingly, attempts at rehabilitation of a terrorist along strict ideological or political lines may be ineffective, if not a waste of time. Instead, his reintegration into society should probably be predicated upon reducing or neutralizing his sense of alienation. This might be accomplished by providing the terrorist (and the potential terrorist) with opportunities for gainful employment and with that, upward economic and social mobility. It is often noted that the United States suffers from considerably less domestic terrorism than many of its western democratic counterparts. The reasons for this are manifold: that the US is less polarized politically than other western states; that the US is a socially and ethnically absorptive society (melting pot theory) and, perhaps most importantly, that the US is an extraordinarily socially and economically upward mobile society. Its citizens largely do not experience the sense of entrapment in one social stratum or feel locked out of any chance of economic advancement. What alienation does exist is generally confined to the lower, Black and Hispanic-populated classes where this alienation leads to crime but not--because of the largely non-ideological character of the American polity--to terrorism.

Lastly, it may be a delusion to think that threat of imprisonment has the same deterrent impact on the terrorist as it may on the ordinary person. To a certain extent, it probably has no effect on most terrorists whatsoever. What, in fact, should he fear? Given the large prison populations of terrorists in Italy and Turkey, for example, the terrorist who is unlucky enough to be arrested can take solace in the fact that he will find many of his friends and compatriots waiting for him in jail. Moreover, in prison he simply enters into the same milieu he existed in outside of jail: the comradery of like-minded, goal-directed persons, the same supportive and cooperative network and the hierarchical leadership of the terrorist group. Indeed, prison may have compensatory aspects as well: the terrorist can finally shrug off the anxiety and fear of apprehension that pervades "life on the outside"; he can drop out of that furtive life of moving from safe-house to safe-house and the constant fear of discovery and betrayal, and basically live out his sentence with his fellow terrorists.

This kind of thought should not obscure the fact that there are very many different types of terrorists and indeed very different terrorist individuals within certain types. But the above considerations suggest-- perhaps contrary to popular notions to the effect that terrorists are all rigid and fanatical--that terrorists are often young people who are floundering (or, at least in the recent past, have been floundering) and who are very impressionable, be it by personalities or by superficial political or social ideas that seem profound to them because they lack depth of education. Thus, being impressionable, many of them are perfectly good prospects for psychological efforts at rebuilding their thought structure. But even though they may be very open to such efforts, the number of appeals to which they may respond is perhaps very limited. Economic appeals will rarely be enough, at least not to the very limited extent such appeals can be made in reality. Except for those on the lowest levels, ideas may well be the lever with which to move them, be it in the direction of forsaking terrorism or in the direction of preventing them from taking it up in the first place. Above all, perhaps, they will probably respond to being taken seriously and respected as individuals, because that is precisely what they lacked most in their youth, and, it appears, craved most. How to do this in actual detail is, of course, a different matter.

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